Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently amended) A vertebral implant for interposition between two vertebral endplates comprising:

a tubular body sized to fit between the two vertebral endplates;

a pair of ring-shaped cleat assemblies, each cleat assembly comprising an outer end wall, an inner end wall, and a side wall which defines a hollow bore,

wherein one or more spikes extend from each outer end wall, and wherein each hollow bore is sized to fit over an end of the tubular body and is configured to slidably pass from the end along at least a portion of the length of the tubular body directly in an axial direction.

2. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 wherein prior to interposition between the two vertebral endplates, the tubular body is slidably passed through the hollow bores in each of the cleat assemblies and wherein the spikes on each outer end wall are directed away from each other and extend toward opposite ends of the tubular body without extending past the opposite ends of the tubular body.

3. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 further comprising an attachment assembly for attaching the tubular body to the cleat assemblies, the attachment assembly comprising:

one or more apertures extending through the side walls of each of the cleat assemblies;

an attachment member extendable through one of the one or more apertures into contact with the tubular body.

4. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 3 wherein the one or more apertures is threaded and the attachment member is a set screw.

5. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 wherein one or more openings extend through the side walls of each of the cleat assemblies, the openings sized to permit graft material entry into the hollow bore.

6. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 wherein the inner end wall of each of the cleat assemblies is provided with one or more alignment positions for aligning and positioning the cleat assemblies.

7. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 wherein for at least one of the cleat assemblies, the outer end wall is angled with respect to the inner end wall.

8. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 wherein the end walls of the cleat assemblies are furrowed.

9. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 wherein the hollow bore of each cleat assembly is smooth.

10. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 1 wherein the hollow bore has a diameter between 13 mm and 25 mm.

11. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 7 wherein the angle between the outer end wall and the inner end wall is between 4 and 15 degrees.

12. (Currently amended) A vertebral implant for interposition between two vertebral endplates comprising:

a biologic strut sized to fit between the two vertebral endplates;

a pair of ring-shaped cleat assemblies, each cleat assembly comprising an outer end wall, an inner end wall, and a sidewall which defines a hollow bore,

wherein one or more spikes extend from each outer end wall, and wherein each hollow bore is sized to fit over an end of the biologic strut and is configured to slidably pass from the end along at least a portion of the length of the biologic strut directly in an axial direction.

13. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 12 further including at least one threaded aperture through each sidewall and a set screw extendable through each aperture for fixing the biologic strut to the cleat assemblies.

14. (Original) The vertebral implant of claim 12 wherein the set screws are extended through each aperture after a distractive force separates the cleat assemblies to achieve a desired vertebral alignment.

15. (Currently amended) A vertebral implant system for interposition in a variable space between two vertebral endplates to create a desired vertebral alignment, the implant system comprising:

a tubular body having a first opposite end and a second opposite end, the tubular body sized to span at least a portion of the space between the vertebral endplates;

a first cleat assembly comprising a first spiked end wall for attaching the first cleat assembly to one of the vertebral endplates and a first side wall defining a first hollow bore for slidably passing the first opposite end through the first cleat assembly directly in an axial direction;

a second cleat assembly comprising a second spiked end wall for attaching the second cleat assembly to the other vertebral endplate and a second side wall defining second hollow bore for slidably passing the second opposite end through the second cleat assembly,

16. (Original) The system of claim 15 further comprising an attachment system for fixing the first and second cleat assemblies to the tubular body after the first and second cleat assemblies have been attached to the vertebral endplates.

17. (Original) The system of claim 16 wherein the attachment system comprises at least one threaded aperture in each of the first and second side walls and a set screw extendable through each of the threaded apertures.

18. (Original) The system of claim 17 wherein the set screws are extended through each of the threaded apertures after a distracting force varies the space between vertebral endplates to create the desired vertebral alignment.